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Firewise NEWS

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NWCG Wildland/Urban
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USDA Forest Service

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Bureau of Land Management
US Fish & Wildlife Service
National Park Service

Federal Emergency
Management Agency

International Association of
Fire Chiefs

National Emergency
Management Association

National Fire
Protection Association

U.S. Fire Administration

State Forestry Organizations

FLAGSTAFF FIRE DEPARTMENT – FUEL MANAGEMENT DIVISION RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY FOR EFFORTS TO REDUCE WILDFIRE RISK

For Immediate Release: January 3, 2008

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – It is a firefighter who is counted on to battle a blaze and protect communities from wildfire. In Flagstaff Arizona, it is also a firefighter who is counted on to guide residents toward taking action year-round to ensure they are prepared when a wildfire strikes.

The record-breaking number of wildfires this year is a painful reminder of the importance of wildfire preparedness. Residents who take simple Firewise steps around their homes to clear vegetation and create defensible space will reduce their wildfire vulnerability.

The Flagstaff Fire Department has helped residents do just that. Their hard work has earned them national recognition from the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's (NWCG) Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Working Team with a Firewise Leadership Award. Steve Gatewood, former director of the Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership, will announce the division as winner during the City Council work session on Monday February 4th, at 4:00 PM in the Council Chambers located in City Hall.

“The Flagstaff Fire Department - Fuel Management Division's program takes a proactive approach to educate, involve, and support local residents in creating and maintaining Firewise characteristics around their homes and properties,” said Mark Brehl, Firewise Coordinator for the Flagstaff Fire Department.

The department led efforts to establish two Firewise Communities/USA sites in the past year, while four others are expected to complete the process within the next few months. Firewise Communities/USA is a national recognition program for communities that work together to assess and reduce their wildfire risk.

“In a community where many property owners value every tree on their forested lands, a great paradigm shift has been witnessed amongst the majority of residents in the area,” says Brehl. “Not only do they better understand the threat of wildfire, but also understand their responsibility to create and maintain a Firewise home and property.”

In addition to member agencies and organizations, the National WUI Fire Program functions in cooperation with other NWCG Working Teams, the National Fire Plan, and related programs.

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The Firewise Leadership Awards are designed to honor individuals and organizations that are the driving force behind wildfire mitigation activities in residential developments in the wildland/urban interface. The Flagstaff Fire Department – Fuel Management Division has been recognized for their extensive efforts furthering Firewise programs and minimizing loss of life and property to wildland fire independent of firefighting efforts. Winners were selected based on their efforts on the local, state, and regional level.

"Flagstaff Fire Dept has labored for a decade to restore our forests and ensure community protection from wildfire. In that time, our program has grown significantly, as has community awareness and support. We appreciate the recognition this award brings to our effort and the community," states Fuel Management Officer Paul Summerfelt.

"Firewise Leadership Award winners serve as a perfect example of how communities and homeowners can work together to prepare for the threat of wildfire and their work deserves recognition," said Alan Dozier, chair of the NWCG's Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Working Team. "What makes Firewise work are these individual 'spark plugs' who are passionate about the Firewise mission and who are leading the way to get the work done."

In addition to recognizing the winners, the Firewise Leadership Awards program helps program administrators capture success stories and share best practices across the country, between all types of interests – public, private, and tribal. This year, six individuals and organizations from across the country are being recognized for their outstanding efforts.

Communities and residents interested in learning more about the Firewise Communities program may visit www.firewise.org, contact the Flagstaff Fire Department at (928) 556-1207 or visit www.flagstaff.az.gov/fuelmanagement.

The national Firewise Communities program is an interagency program designed to encourage local solutions for wildfire safety by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, firefighters, and others in the effort to protect people and property from the risk of wildfire. The Firewise Communities program is sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Wildland/Urban Interface Working Team, a consortium of wildland fire agencies that includes the USDA Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Emergency Management Association, the US Fire Administration, the National Association of State Fire Marshals, the National Fire Protection Association, and state forestry organizations. For more information, visit www.firewise.org.

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